

## **Stranger Things Have Happened by chaosvox**

**Category:** IT (2017), IT - Stephen King, Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Dustin Henderson, Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven (Stranger Things), Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Hanlon, Mike Wheeler, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, Will Byers

**Status:** In-Progress

**Published:** 2018-02-08

**Updated:** 2018-02-08

**Packaged:** 2022-04-21 15:01:25

**Rating:** General Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 2,584

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

When paths intersect and a familiar darkness is awoken, will new bonds be strong enough to protect everyone? How do you fight something that you can't remember?

## **Stranger Things Have Happened**

“Freedom!” an energetic Richie shouted, running down the stairs of the school with a tired-looking Stan trailing behind.

Together, they wove through the crowd of fellow students whose classes had finally been released for the summer.

“Hurry up, Stan! Mike’s probably already waiting by the bikes,” Richie said.

Stan huffed. “Richie, I am literally right behind you.”

“Yeah? Well, your mom moved faster than that last night!”

Stan let out an exasperated sigh as he and Richie finally reached the predetermined meeting place next to the bike rack. Mike, as Richie has predicted, was already standing idly near, waiting for his friends. Ever since the summer two years prior, Mike had seamlessly been incorporated into the ‘Loser’s Club’ (as deemed by Richie), and would ride his bike down to the schoolyard to wait for his friends if he’d finished his chores by the time school got out.

“Stanley,” Richie whined, “you made Mikey wait for us.” The pout he directed at Stan made him look enough like a puppy dog to make women fall to their knees — or, so Richie claimed.

“Hey, guys,” Mike said with a chuckle, “how was your last day?”

“Hiya there, Mikey mah’ boy!” Richie moved closer to Mike and slung an arm over his shoulders.

“Oh, our poor, dismal existence has brightened considerably now that school is out for the summah’, my dear fellow!” Richie pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose for effect before continuing in his terrible accent, “And, now, we must take advantage of our newfound freedom and explore the great unknown!” Ending his speech, he threw the arm he didn’t currently have wrapped tight around his friend up into the air; after enduring a seemingly infinite hell, they finally had two months of absolute freedom. Freedom, with which he

would waste all of his money at the arcade and laze around the town with no responsibilities. Richie couldn't wait.

"Where're the others?" Mike pointed this question at Stan, in hopes of getting an understandable explanation for their current absence, rather than asking Richie who was grinning impishly to himself. Stan just shrugged.

"Probably got hung up saying goodbyes to teachers. They're nice like that."

"They better hurry up. I don't think I can wait to empty this shit!" Richie detached from Mike to excitedly hold up his backpack and shake it around.

"Hu-hey, guys! Sorry wuh-we're late, Eddie ha-h-had to give his teachers some thank-you nuh-notes from his mom," said an approaching Bill, followed closely by Ben and Eddie.

"Why didn't you just eat them?"

Stan let out an exasperated sigh, turning to Richie. "How are you still alive?"

Richie sent a cheeky wink back.

"My mom had me write hand-write them all last night. My arm's still sore," Eddie grumbled in displeasure and rubbed his wrist for effect.

"Ey, that's not the only thing that's sore, amiright' boys?"

Stan lowered the hand Richie had raised for a high-five.

"Shut up, Richie," Eddie said, shoving his shoulder lightly. Now that they were all present, the boys mounted their bikes and began the trek to the Quarry — a trip they'd previously agreed to take every Friday after school. They rode in relative silence, excluding the comments Richie made every street or so that they'd grown to ignore, and reached their destination relatively quickly.

The Quarry was the designated meeting place of the whole Loser's Club. Whenever someone needed out of their house or wanted some

company, they'd call one of the others and word would get around until at least most of them would be there. Following the summer two years ago, the boys had become close friends. Despite them not remembering exactly what had happened, they all knew they were safer together. Whatever had haunted them that year couldn't reach them if they stayed close to one another.

Just a short time after the It, the memories had begun to fade. Once Beverly left with her aunt, all that was left was the knowledge that something dark had infested Derry. Every once in awhile though, the Loser's would have flashes of a dark sewer, the worn-down house on Neibolt, a haunting laugh, the shiny color of red and—

### *Floating.*

"Last one in's a wimp-ass pussy!" Richie shouted as he carelessly abandoned his bike, letting it fall to the ground, and ran towards the cliff's drop-off. The others, not wanting to be out-done by the loudmouth, rush to join him in ripping off their clothes, leaving only them in only their underwear; only Stan bothered to put down the kickstand of his bike before following. Richie finished first, having had the short head-start, and he dashed to the edge and jumped. Next to was Bill.

"Cu-Come on, guys!" He called to his friends as he ran to leap into the water below.

Mike followed shortly behind with a small, "Whoop!"

The rest of the Loser's trailed in after. Once everyone was in, they relaxed in the water, easing from the lack of stress stemming from school or farm work. Eventually, they found themselves in a three-way chicken fight.

Mike had hoisted Ben onto his shoulders, and Stan had used a boulder on the outreach of the water to perch on Bill's. Richie, however, was having a harder time getting his partner to cooperate.

"If you drop me, Richie—I swear to god."

"I'm not gonna drop ya' Eds! Just get on my back so we can show

these losers how it's done!" The rest of the boys watched in amusement as Richie finally convinced his short friend to climb on his back.

"Alrighty," Bill said, his head bobbing just above the water, "luh-last one who gets knocked doh-down gets to pick the first thing we do this su-suh-summer."

"Wait," Ben objected, "we're in pairs, so does that mean we both lose if I fall?" He didn't exactly want to drag Mike down with him, literally.

"Also, isn't this the first thing we're doing, anyway?" Richie questioned, to which everyone ignored.

"We can do a tur-tournament, that way everyone guh-gets a chance on tuh-top." Bill answered Ben's question. Everyone agreed—though it would be rare for anyone to actually oppose him. The first round commenced with Stan being shoved into the water by a small but aggressive Eddie, who was then pulled into the quarry as well, while his vanquished foe grabbed onto his wrists in mutually assured failure. Ben survived by avoiding his two friends for about four seconds.

The next round consisted of Stan with Mike on his shoulders after swimming under his muscular friend in order to raise him up, Eddie with his head barely above the water holding up Bill, and Richie riding atop Ben—his strong and loyal steed.

"Charge on, my dear Benny boy! Charge on!" Richie cried with an outstretched finger, pointing towards his opponents. This, however, led to his undoing as the laws of physics betrayed him and immediately dragged him down into the water the second Ben started moving forward. This also brought upon the downfall of the Bill-Eddie pair as the two, finding this scene absolutely hysterical, also collapsed, succumbing to gravity's cruel power.

With Mike and Stan the last two standing, the final round would be Mike and Ben. Eddie and Richie quickly claimed the roles of not supporting their friends and were very comfortably seated on a nearby boulder waiting to watch the impending finale of the small

competition. It ended with Bill holding up Mike and Stan holding Ben.

Once the two towers ceased their drastic wobbling, Richie called from the boulder to initiate the brawl. “Come on, then! Push him down, Mike! Push him down or we’ll be spending the summer in the dusty library surrounded by sexually frustrated librarians!” Richie’s call inspired multiple eye rolls but succeeded in spurring the boys forward.

As they approached each other, an odd thought struck Mike. It was as if...if he pushed Ben down, he wouldn’t stop in the water. He would continue to fall. He would fall until Mike was certain he would hear a sudden—

*Crack.*

Water flooded Mike’s lungs. He had inhaled in surprise and rose back to the air in time to witness a disgruntled Bill shake water from his rust-colored locks and Ben falling into the water, taking a very unhappy looking Stan down with him.

What was that? Mike glanced around the quarry. He soon shoved that thought out of his head as Richie jumped back in and began a vicious splash war.

They stayed in the water until their hands pruned and the sun began its journey down. By the time that it set, they’d all be in their homes.

Mike left first, needing to get a head start on his ride back home since he lived the furthest. He was followed by Ben, Eddie, and Stan, who lived close enough that they would usually go home together. During the frequent times they rode together, Ben often would pass his house first and continue on with the other two. Just to make sure they got home safely. He didn’t fully understand his need to see that his friends entered their homes unharmed, but he attributed it to one of those mental scars they all had. The strange ticks they’d developed without being able to recall exactly why. But Ben trusted the feeling deep in his gut that told him to not leave them alone. Besides, neither Stan nor Eddie ever complained.

Richie, like Ben, also felt the need to not leave Bill alone on their rides and rode the extra few streets to the Denbrough house with him. Bill had only ever brought it up once, but after seeing the somewhat sheepish look in Richie's eyes while the loudmouth searched for the words to explain himself or, more likely, brush off the topic with a joke, Bill decided to let it go. He understood the need to see his friends safe, too.

When Richie finally reached his own house after riding with Bill and seeing him off, he walked in and began to head up the stairs—only to hesitate after a few steps when he spotted his mom sitting at their kitchen table. The smoke, minimum amount of lights turned on, and her head in her hands told him that she was currently fighting off a nasty hangover.

"Richie, can you come here?" She called when she noticed his presence, his steps probably sounding like an earthquake to her sensitive ears. The way she asked came out more as a demand than a question, so he shuffled slowly closer but ignored her motions indicating she wanted him to sit down. She sighed.

"Your father and I are going on a trip. A business trip." His mother leaned back in her chair.

"We'll be leaving Sunday morning, and I'm going to have to send you to your uncle's for a few weeks while we're gone."

Richie schooled his face to show minimal disappointment, but inside he was seething. All the plans his friends and he had made were wasted because his dad wanted out of the house he never spent time in any way? His mom wanted a chance to go get drunk in some other town? How was the fuck was that fair?

"Fine." He grumbled out between teeth clenched shut. He knew there was no sense arguing with her. Still didn't stop him from drenching his response in spite, though.

"How am I supposed to even get there? I thought that Ted lived in Illinois or something."

"Your Uncle Ted," she muttered, "lives in Indiana with your cousins."

Carelessly, she slid some money across the table and gestured for Richie to take it. He did, unhappily.

“There’s enough money for a bus ticket in there. There should be some left over, too. I trust you’ll spend it carefully, cus’ I don’t want to be owing Ted anymore than we already will be just by having you stay there.”

“Thanks, mom.” Richie growled before swiftly turning around, leaving both the kitchen and his mother behind. Stomping away, he slammed his bedroom door and collapsed onto the bed, smothering his face in his pillow with a groan.

“Fuck.”

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‘Dear Beverly,’

Bill was sat at his desk, his pen stuck in his mouth, clenched between teeth. He’d been sitting there for the past half-hour trying to find the perfect words to send to his friend. Ever since Beverly had moved to Portland, they had kept up a steady exchange of letters going back and forth. Within the first few letters sent, they’d quickly decided that it best for them to stay just friends, considering the distance.

‘I entered a writing competition—’

He stopped there. He didn’t know if he wanted to tell her about the short story he had entered, seeing as he hadn’t gotten any news back from the Young Horror: Whirlpool student writing competition since he’d entered in the first place. He settled on erasing the sentence he’d started and wrote about how excited he was to be on summer break instead.

Once he’d finished with that, he wrote a friendly goodbye filled with wishes of seeing her soon. Bill carefully sealed the envelope and stood from his desk in order to go downstairs and put the letter into the Denbrough family mailbox. Moving through the house quietly, he forced himself to not spare a look at the youngest Denbrough’s room.

Maybe he couldn't remember everything that had happened the previous summer, but he'd never forget that his brother had been unfairly taken from him by whatever dark presence the Loser's had fought. Bill hoped that he had personally gotten to take a shot at it.

When he'd finally made his way to the mailbox, he was surprised to see that there was something already inside. After exchanging the two letters, Bill looked at the one he now held in his hand and his heart raced. A letter from the Whirlpool writing competition.

He rushed back inside, returned to his desk, and grabbed a letter-opener so haphazardly that Eddie would have lectured him on knife safety had he been there. Ignoring his friend's voice in the back of his head, Bill continued his task of cutting the seal keeping the paper inside. Once he finally had the envelope opened, his feverish eyes scanned the first few lines.

*Congratulations to William Denbrough for placing second in the Young Horror: Whirlpool writing competition for the entry of 'Summer'. The award ceremony will be hosted in Indianapolis, IN. at the Indianapolis Museum of Art on the upcoming 18th of June.*

Bill stopped reading, a smile stretching on his face. A quick glance at his calendar told him he would only have the weekend to prepare for the trip. His smile faded. If he went on the trip, that is.

Ever since that stormy day two Octobers ago, his parents had acted like ghosts. They moved through the house as if they weren't actually there, phantoms trapped in their mourning. Bill knew they would allow him to go, seeing as his presence only reminded them of the gap in their family, but the real question was if they would accompany him. He sighed, slipped the letter into his desk drawer, and stood.

Bill hoped he would be able to convince at least one of them to come with him to the awards ceremony. He exited his room and went downstairs to make his dinner that he'd eat alone. Again.

#### **Author's Note:**

I'm looking for a co-author or editor to bounce ideas

of off so pm me if you're interested <3